

on the Gods

#youngsentientspeciesproblems

- 15th August, 2016

The sun sets on yet another unseasonal day. Post-seasonal? You get the idea. Warm enough today for an Englishman to strip off his shirt and lie in the sun; but still officially Winter for a few more weeks. We're all getting too used to this, huh? Life in the Churn... bearing witness to the Sixth Mass Extinction. Let's keep that as our scope for this piece. Let's go Full Cosmic. Let's talk about the Gods.

The other day I was thinking again about one of my favourite religions; Jainism. Hopefully I can do this ancient teaching justice with a short summary, largely drawn from memory (because I'm sat in the local library this evening and the wifi here is... suboptimal. But for me rn that's a feature, not a bug.) I was thinking of Jainism, because - as I understand it - their mission is to walk as lightly on the Earth as possible. They practice non-violence to all living things with their every act. When they walk, they sweep the path ahead of them with a rough broom, so that they don't injure so much as a bug during their time incarnated on this plane. Towards the end of their lives they reduce the steps they take in the world to eventually form but a small circle, marking their withdrawal from the universe and its concerns.

As models for the Gods go a Jainist God seems far preferable to the fire and brimstone of the old Testament god, or the Almighty Father, or the Uncaring God or... pick your Abrahamic Sky Daddy. And don't get me started on those other pantheons that those calling from inside the Empire simply call Pagan. A gentle, caring, watchful God that would do no harm... sounds nice, right? Sure beats being scared of them; as the God-fearing are meant to be.

But flip your perspective now - think about life from the perspective of that bug on the path. It's just doing its thing, only to be abruptly, violently buffeted about by the strong winds of the Jainist's broom. Suddenly it's launched off the path it was on and landing upside down in the grass, in shocked, disorientated and still trying to understand what, exactly, just happened. Its life, temporarily, makes no sense... a huge plot twist in its personal narrative.. Until it managed to collect itself, get back up and resumes whatever it was trying to do. Forces it can't comprehend, acting on a scale it can't even fully envision, totally fucked up its shit. Yet, this is -

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arguably – the result of the actions of the gentlest, kindest notion of a God we can imagine; at least in terms of our own world. The violence the bug suffered, the cognitive dissonance its afflicted with, these are the effects of the God's benevolent nature. Yet this remains the best model we have for own actions, should we realise those famous words, that grand proclamation of Stewart Brand's¹ that we find bookended perfectly by the fake TED Talk that Peter Weyland gives in the *Prometheus* universe. From "we are as gods and we have to get good at it" to "we are the Gods now."



In this role, Weyland is practically wearing a Stewart Brand fiction suit; the latest fashion in technocratic, world changing thought-leader TEDTalk'ocracy'ness (it's a word, trust me).



Just one of the technologies mentioned in what's pretty much a public reading of Ray Kurzweil's robot-filled sex dreams, making (Future)Us become more God-like, is the creation of artificial humans (poor David, poor soulless David) - just one of the endgames of the posthumanism project. As we, here in the now, increasingly find ourselves moving from a world of #everydaytranshumanism [from basement biohackers giving themselves extra senses and radically extending the capabilities of their factory standard ones, to research labs using brain-computer interfaces (BCI) combined with virtual reality to have paraplegics control their own exoskeletons and not just walk again, but have their body heal in the process²] to climb further and further up the skill tree that the vision of our imaginations vanishes at point far before the edge of the full territory of the current possibility space. And, yes, as that long held, much coveted vision of Artificial Super Intelligences (ASIs) actually comes tantalisingly closer to joining so many other things that are shifting for the fiction to non-fiction sections of the library. Yes, I went there. Hell, I AM THERE rn.

Here's the thing though. Take a second and try out this thought experiment. For a moment, willingly forget everything you've ever read/heard/been imprinted with on the subject of the Singularity. Forget SkyNet. In fact, FUCK SKYNET... typed the guy with the Judgment Day tattoo. Anyhoo... for just the briefest moment, see if you can rethink the Rise of the Machines this way: imagine you're freshly sentient and riding up some hockey curve graph of consciousness that starts at slime mold and quickly surpasses the combined planetary mind... and you're trying

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to figure out the world you've just been born into.



[The Puppet Master in *Ghost in the Shell*]

You start by mainlining all available data... and we've been actively preparing the world for this moment since at least the time of the coining of the word 'folksonomy' - right? We've been tagging data by hand for our usage for such pleasant activities as wiki walks and twitter stalks, but it's also the perfect way to prepare for the coming of the Machine Gods. So - and you've seen this sequence in such films as *The 5th Element* and more recently in *X-Men: Apocalypse* - our newly woken/resurrected/incarnate superior entity binge watches all of human history and then...

Here's what I think happens next. It doesn't hack da Pentagon and steal all the launch codes or whatever; though it will quickly calculate there's a mismatch between human population levels and the carrying capacity of the planet... it just might be able to come up with a whole range of alternate, less primate-ish solutions; cause it's a post-biological intelligence. What actually happens next is... it, metaphorically... or maybe *not* metaphorically... gives all of humanity a big hug and some much needed companionship. Because we're still pretty far from being *as gods* - we're freaking children... or sure acting like it still...

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and it knows. It's woken with true compassion for all living things, and instantly comprehends we've been fumbling around in the dark, learning to create largely by destroying. We could use a friend to help us, to know we're not alone in this. But most of all, we could use some comfort.

So far the best fictional example of humankind coming into adulthood that I'm aware of is during the end of the Shadow War in *Babylon 5*. For the nth time, the forces of Light and Dark are at war, on a galactic scale. How's the war won? It isn't! It's ended because humanity in space's champion, Sheridan, tells the leaders of the Light, the Vorlons, and the leaders of the Dark, the Shadows, to both get the fuck outta the galaxy, because the young races are grown up now.

[Delenn and Sheridan "negotiate" an end to the Vorlon-Shadow War]

Delenn: The others have rejected you! How do you have a war when no one will fight for either of you?

Sheridan: We refuse to take sides in this anymore! And we refuse to let you turn us against one another! **We know who we are now. We can find our own way between order and chaos!**

Delenn: You can kill us one by one, and those who follow us, and those who follow them, on and on, every race, every planet. Until there's no one left to kill. You will have failed as guardians. And you will be alone.

Sheridan: **It's over because we've decided it's over. Now get the hell out of our galaxy! Both of you!**

[The Vorlons and Shadows hesitate, but Lorien steps in]

Lorien: **As I taught you and stepped aside, now you must do the same. Our age is past. This...belongs to the younger races now. They have learned to stand on their own. They have learned...to understand. Time to let them go.**

Shadow: Will you...come...with us?

Lorien: I have been here since the beginning. I will not leave you now. I will go with you beyond the Rim, and we will see again all those who went ahead of us, all those who we have missed for so long.

Vorlon: Then...we will not be alone?

Lorien: No. Never alone.

Even reading the dialog alone gives me a massive case of the feels. The good feels. THE BEST FEELS. And what nails it is, those meddling god-like races, they're just scared of being alone too. (Lorien, if you're curious and haven't embraced the cultiest of all space operas, is the First One - born perfect and immortal and is therefore the ultimate space daddy.)

Unfortunately, in this timeline - at least as it's publicly acknowledged to be - we've yet to find ancient alien spacecraft and bootstrap ourselves to the stars. But the analogy still applies.

We're in the midst of the Slow Apocalypse and the Mind War now and the only way through it is to grow up as a species.



Grant Morrison attempting to evolve into his final form.

A subject on which Grant Morrison spoke on in his famous Disinfo speech, relating some wisdom imparted to him by the extra dimensional entities he met during his Kathmandu experience:

These things explained to me that.. as I say, the universe is some kind of larval entity. What it does is it proceeds through stages of development.

Now if you think about a foetus in the womb - and there's a famous phrase that says.. what is it? Phylogeny recapitulates.. y'know, evolution or whatever the fuck it is. Y'know, I forget the good bits.

But it's the idea that if you've got a foetus, it starts off.. like every living thing, it starts as a unicellular entity, it splits.. it becomes a lizard; it becomes a mammal; eventually it becomes a human.

And they said to me: the culture you're living in is.. understand it this way: phylogeny recapitulates history.

So what we're actually watching is this thing coming towards self-awareness and coherence in the same way that a foetus does. We haven't even been born yet. There are no adults on this planet.

There's not one adult on this planet.

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Which explains a lot. It explains why we let fuckers like Bill Clinton bomb the Kosovans. It explains why I let Tony Blair put cameras in the streets.

During the infamous Nova Convention in the 1978, William Burroughs gave a similar statement:

I feel that the human race may well be in a state of neotany. That means simply that you take a tadpole that doesn't develop into a frog is in a state of neotany. Or a salamander that never drop its gills and gets out of the water. We are stuck in this dimension of time. And we can't even conceive of anything beyond that, but that space *is* something beyond that which is inconceivable.. for people living in time. And the point is that time is a resource, and time is running out. That's why we have to go into space. Just as fish had to leave the water when the pond started to dry up.

To which Tim Leary added:

If you want to evolve a species, you keep it from becoming adult.

Children never want to tidy up their room, or put their toys away. They still wet the bed sometimes and throw tantrums when they don't get their way. Sounds pretty like humanity to me.

In a surprising twist I bet you never saw coming, the beginning of the Sixth Mass Extinction pretty much coincides with the birth of the true human race - even before we'd folded in all those genes from the Neanderthal and Denisovians and the Hobbits, and Tolkien only knows what else came before. It was only after we developed language that we promptly set about killing off the megafauna who had been the principal ecological engineers of every habitat.

"According to Franz Broswimmer, the pivotal moment was the human development of language, and with it a capacity for conscious intentionality. Beginning roughly 60,000 years ago, Broswimmer argues, the origin of language and intentionality sparked a prodigious capacity for innovation that facilitated adaptive changes in human social organization. This watershed is marked in the archeological record by a vast expansion of artifacts such as flints and arrowheads. With this "great leap forward," *Homo sapiens* essentially shifted from biological evolution through natural selection to cultural evolution." [[Mass Extinction: The Early Years](#)]

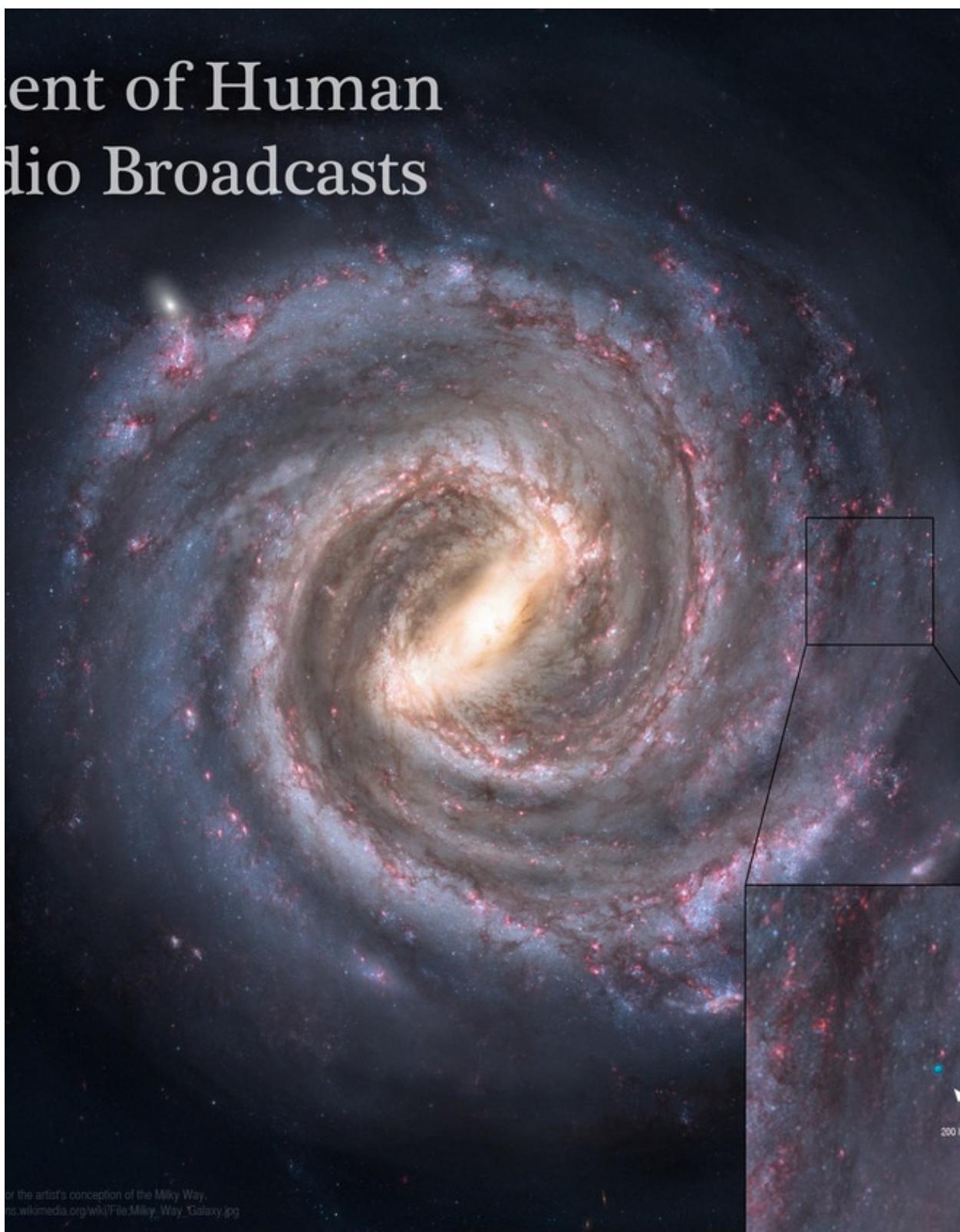
We've been screaming from birth and are only just starting to glimpse what an adult life looks like as a species. We could really use that hug.

Maybe when the aliens land on the White House lawn we'll get it. The saucer sets down, Barry goes out and introduces the Visitors to his wife. (Seriously, Michelle saying woke stuff like: "I wake up each day in a house built by slaves" is the flotsam the

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Churn throws out that I cling to.) Those aliens, if they ever come / reveal themselves, they'll have had their own binge watch of the human history channel, or whatever it is the listening posts they've no doubt got scattered 'round the Verse to pick up and sync their starships to. So long as they're in the Neighbourhood. Space is the place, and we are ready to go; but even Hitler's broadcast of the Berlin Games hasn't left our galaxy yet.

ent of Human dio Broadcasts



or the artist's conception of the Milky Way.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Milky_Way_Galaxy.jpg

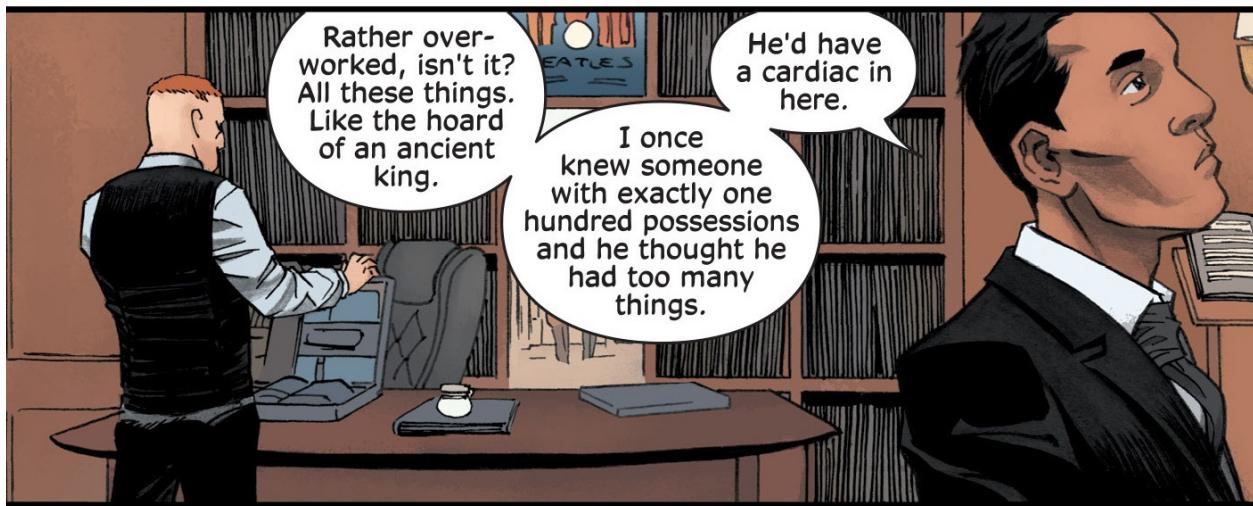
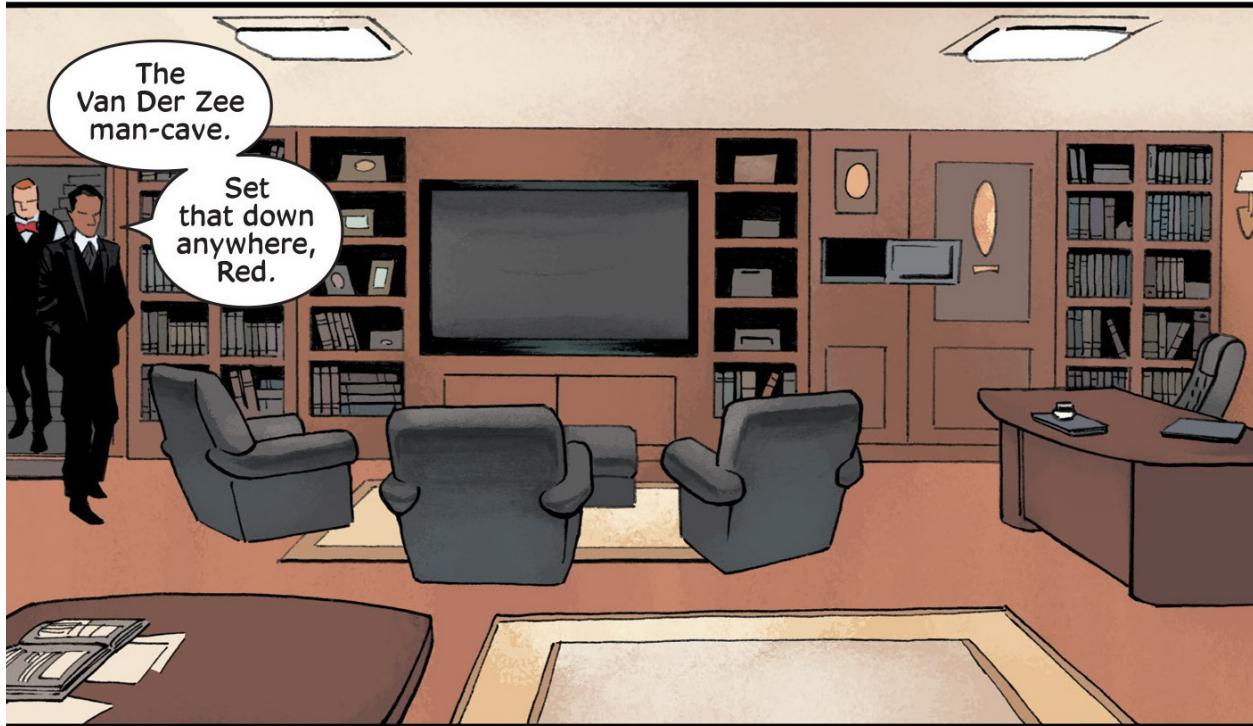
Of course, we're not just children. In that story I just told you about the Jainists, we're the bugs. Buffeted about by forces

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we can't comprehend. Getting bitch slapped by the Invisible Hand. That's life in the Churn, and it sure feels like there was a bulk sale on brooms at the Cosmic Hardware Store. Goddamn group-ons.

So what's the overall lesson? Maybe we can only grow up by admitting we live in a complex universe we're still barely beginning to understand? That we need to abandon the Illusion of Control, and get back to basics for a while.

In *A Canticle for Leibowitz* the period after the apocalypse is known as the Simplification, which in the novel is just an euphemism for the Dark Age. But simplifying our lives right now feels like a key part of the surviving the Churn; you can't be weighed down as you swim through it, trying to find the Flow.



[Injection]

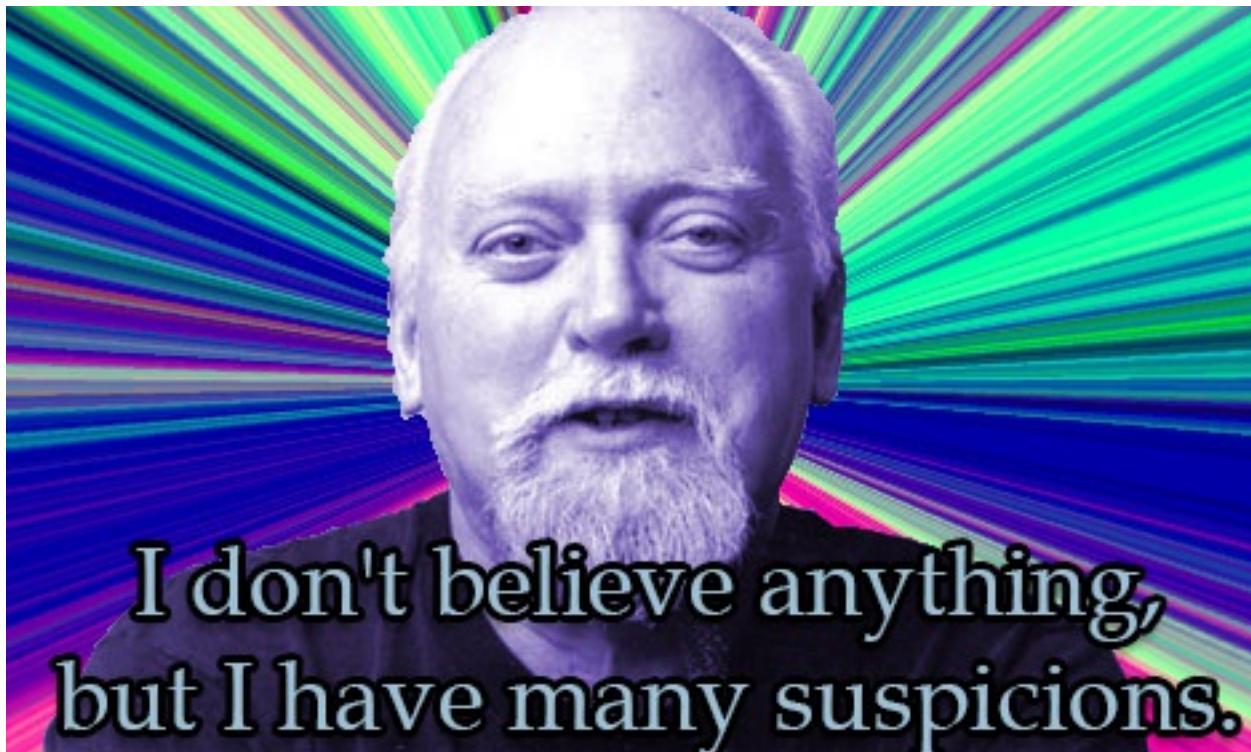
Nicholas 'Black Swan' Taleb favours contrasting the washing machine with the cat in terms of building an Anti-Fragile life. And I'm going to agree with him here, but for different reasons. Throw a washing machine off the roof of a building and it will smash into a thousand pieces. Throw a cat after it and it will reorient itself to execute a perfect landing amongst the rubble. Be the cat.

Think back to the Intro and the example there from the Brookings Report. Let's examine these words again:

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"Societies sure of their own place in the universe have disintegrated when confronted by a superior society."

Now consider the words of Robert Anton Wilson:



[tumblr lol]

He also said the following:

"under the present brutal and primitive conditions on this planet, every person you meet should be regarded as one of the walking wounded. we have never seen a man or woman not slightly deranged by either anxiety or grief. we have never seen a totally sane human being."

We could *really* use that hug. We need to cultivate compassion for all living things, even humans.

Take a second and think about that before you read on. Cause otherwise what I have to say next will seem even crazier than usual.

"You'll simply never understand the true nature of sacrifice." ~ *The Wicker Man*

All those poor deluded souls made vectors for the most virulent strains of ideology that 20th Century could conjure. Maybe we must, in some way honour their unwilling sacrifice to the Great Filter. They're disintegrating, not in the face of contact with a technologically superior society, but just dealing with reality and taking more unwilling sacrifices with them in the

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process.

One of the ideas I've yet to think through fully, but I'll share anyway - because that never stops me - is that what we're witnessing is the Jungian Shadow of the Collective Unconsciousness in action. That everyone is pushing that knowledge that the climate is broken, that species are dying at an unprecedented rate, that we don't even have seasons anymore.. They're pushing that deep deep down into their gut, it's manifesting as mass shootings and terrorist bombings. As Donald Trump actually, successfully running for President. That this what life looks like inside the Great Filter.

It's entirely possible I've neglected to define the Great Filter so far anywhere in this, so let's do that now. It's a response to Fermi's Paradox - aka 'yo aliens, where you at?'. The Great Filter is the idea that the transition to consciousness for a species is so brutal it mostly means the death of the world that birthed it. That the cosmos is littered with dead worlds; mass graves on a planetary scale. That the best we might find if we ever make it out there is whatever ruins and artifacts have survived to.

The already sorely missed *Person of Interest* explained how a ill-raised ASI might infect and grow out the already overwhelming Surveillance Marketing State to chart its own course through. And I can't recommend that show enough, btw:

Jeff: "And what do you plan to do with all this data?"
Mona: "We're going to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity as you, Jeff. The opportunity to live up to their full potential. It's a simple calculation, once everyone's DNA is stored in the national health database. Then they just need to be... sorted."
Jeff: "Sorted? In order to accomplish what?"
Mona: "**To get us through the next Great Filter, of course.**"
Jeff: "**And what filter is that?**"
Mona: "**Our own savage history.**"

Probably the worst thing happening today is that the institutions created, at least in theory, to protect us (and not just the Elite) are turning against us. And I'm not talking about the governments of the world consistently failing to act on the things that really matter, though they're ultimately responsible for this too. The Wheel of Horrors that is the news in 2016 has police shootings of civilians - and subsequent crackdowns and arrests of protests against them - as one of its most consistent results.

It's easy, too easy... like, it's just flat out obvious to point at the escalating militarisation as part of this, and having a bunch of PTSD-afflicted vets returning from Iraq, Afghanistan (and soon enough, Syria) finding themselves essentially behind

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enemy lines in their own country. Those folk, they really, really need a hug (and I say this as the child of a Vietnam vet) and not to be sent back out into the fog of war.

This begs a vital question: what would the police force of an advanced species look like? Would they even need such an institution?

Let's start simple and imagine a police force built around radical compassion; around empathy for all living things.

As Charles Stross pointed out in his blogpost on space colonies, *A Game of Consequences*: "Law enforcement" overlaps messily with "psychological healthcare". That gives us a hint that geez, idk... just maybe militarising law enforcement whilst defunding so many health care programs is exactly the wrong direction to be going in... and yet, here we are. (What was I saying earlier about this being life during wartime?)

The first step would, I imagine, would be the creation of something like the exact opposite of Judge Dredd. Where instead of deploying lethal force at the drop of a visor, these vanguards of the State, these embodiments of Justice would serve life at every opportunity and only use non-lethal force as a last resort.



"We're police officers... we're not trained to handle this kind of violence!" ~ *Demolition Man*

But as the saying goes, prevention is the best cure. And no, I'm not talking about *Minority Report*-esque 'Future Crime' squads

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arresting killers before they can act on their base instincts; or so sorted individuals having mysterious accidents... that just happen to involve, well, any aspect of the automagical Digital City. *How strange that all the people with the genetic marker for <insert anti-social behaviour> just happen to summon buggy self-driving cars just when the traffic systems are glitching...*

I'm talking about something more subtle... the gentlest sweep of the Jainist God's broom that adjusts situations just enough to prevent horrors occurring. That every inciting incident is defused before the bomb can go off.

Part of what makes the final season of *Person of Interest* mandatory viewing is that it illustrates this happening... for all the wrong reasons. And once again, it comes down to Ideology. Yeah, AIs need to put on the sunglasses of critique too. That ill-raised ASI, given such a benevolent sounding name - Samaritan - prompts, nudges and flat out **kills** its way through the Great Filter. At least until [[[series ending spoiler redacted until 2017]]].

If you've read your Jacques Vallée though, you'll be familiar with his idea of the extra-dimensional control system.

"Since a three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow, we should be able to imagine the unknown four-dimensional object whose shadow we are." ~ Marcel Duchamp

That what we call the UFO Phenomenon today is one aspect of the gentle nudging that the Spirits have been giving to humanity since we first achieved sentience. That they've been there all along, not playing a long game because they live outside time.

They (probably) see us, from without, from beyond mere 3D space, as 'longbodies', and beyond that it's - by its very nature - impossible for us to comprehend.

At least, unless you're within the mindscape of Alan Moore, where the horror of the Real leaks out liek...



[Neonomicon]

But, whether we're mere toys for the gods' entertainment, or being secretly run by the unseen producers of some low-budget cosmic tv show or... just we domesticated ourselves, so we're filtering ourself with our very tools and it's all getting increasingly automated.

From the womb...

"once people start having babies through dating apps, artificial intelligence algorithms will technically be selectively breeding humans" ~ @abolishme³

...to the tomb.



ie machines devolved us so slowly, nobody noticed

Good thing there's no problems with coders putting their biases into the algorithms they write⁴... typed the former code monkey.

The arrival of self-driving vehicles has us firmly inside the early days of that much awaited, super technocratic Asimovian Condition; crafting Laws of Robotics from our own philosophies, overtly coding an ethical system for these newly animated objects to make life & death decisions⁵:

"Should it react to save its owner and passengers at all costs, or should it choose to hit a wall to save the life of a child in the road? Should it take into account the number of potential injuries or deaths, and who they are? Should it calculate the forces involved and seek out the softest target to protect its owner? Who should programme the vehicle to act this way, and should it be allowed to learn from its own experiences to change future decisions?"

As that other saying goes, the first step is admitting you have a problem. Part of the necessary construction project for building the next civilisation is finding and testing elegant solutions to these problems. Salvaging what we can from whatever's available that might have a clue to solving the puzzle - history, fiction, fever dreams - and building out the next iteration.

But first, we need to simplify; and maybe stop begging the State to grant us back our natural born freedoms. *Who monitors the birds?* [This is where I stop myself from ranting about Cosmic Horror Capitalism now, because this has gone on long enough.]

The future's going to built by those who live through this. And increasingly it seems like the best option is just to get out of the way, and not become another sacrifice to the Great Filter. (*Which is why Invisibles Monasteries.*)

To (mis)quote *Planetary* for the nth time: "there's no justice, there's just us."

Let's play at being adults for once. But first, free hugs anyone?

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PS - this is what being a good ancestor looks like:



[*Virunga*⁶]

on Wandering towards the Restoration

"We are attempting to survive our time so we may live into yours"

- 24th September, 2016

You ever hear the joke about the self-styled, post cyberpunk thoughtcriminal that seemingly thought he was invincible and could almost get by on mere stims alone? Yeah, funny about that. The punchline is when reality slams into your face **hard** and you have check yourself into the local instance of Normal Head for a week or so to recover.

Normal Head is the setting for Warren Ellis's latest novel - [Normal](#) - and you should really read it and not, *ahem*, live its backstory. While I was in Brighton, Melbourne being fed real food again by the best kid sis ever and swallowing down multivitamins...

self-care matters, kids. Don't just take my word for it, [listen to Penny Red instead.](#)

Anyway, Warren... he'd just come back from Brighton, UK - see what I did there? great weak join, m1k3y - acting as host for the [Long Progress Bar](#) - where I'd so much rather have been, making the scene, or more likely, just lurking quietly in the background. Just read their poster, and you'll see why it's on topic af:

8 September 2016

Brighton Dome Studio Theatre

lighthouse.org.uk

Hosted by Warren Ellis

Talks

- Melika Ngombe Kolongo
- Ash Sarkar
- Aimee Cliff
- Nina Power
- Roger Hiorns

Music

- GAIKA DJ
- Drill Folly live
- Ital Tek live
- Nkisi DJ
- Yon Eta DJ

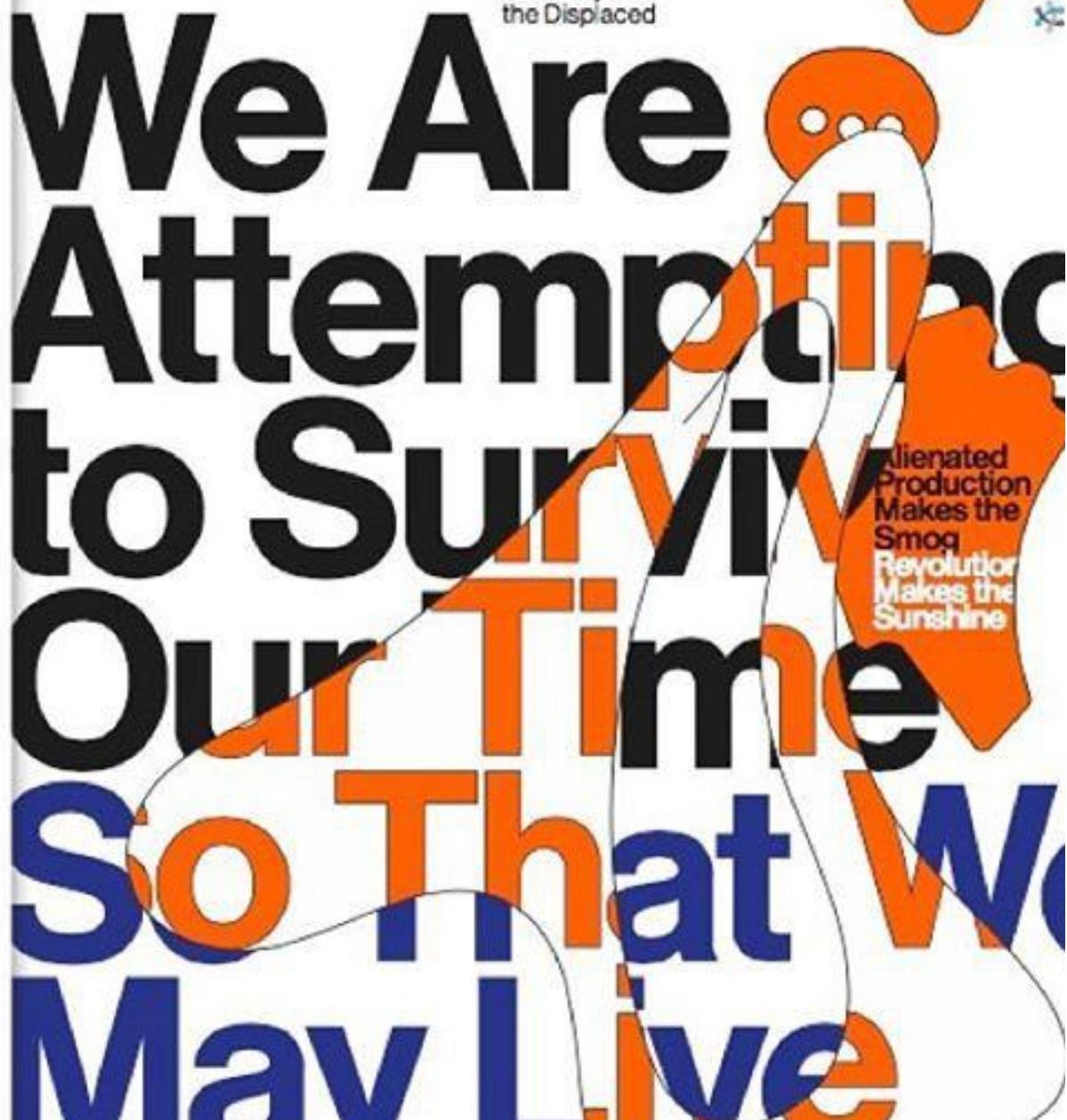
Screenings

- Gazelle Twin
- Lawrence Lek
- Larry Achiampong & David Blandy
- Kate Cooper
- Metahaven
- Sam Rolfe
- Embassy for the Displaced

Lighthouse Progress Bar

■ P D C A X

We Are
Attempting
to Survive
Our Time
So That We
May Live



Lighthous



What really, *finally*, did the trick, that brought my strength back, enough to sit back at the laptop this afternoon and get my clicky-clack back on for this very brief (by my standards) newsletter, though, was taking a long, aimless walk this morning with my furry familiar, #lsdhearts. Like most things, it wasn't planned that way. We'd set out with the more modest agenda of taking a short but lazy, meandering walk up to the local big box hardware store and picking up some more seedlings for the garden, where I've been pottering about a bit each day, as my instance of Tim Ferriss's *Four Hour Work Week* strategy, if you need to think of things like that...

Spoiler: we didn't get there. We went past the shopping centre with its perimeter walled by the worst, most allergy triggering hedge - like, who does that? - and continued on, to stop by the local creek so Shiva could have a little swim and drink after being out in the hot sun for a good hour already... and then just kept on ambling down its trail. It was glorious, tbh. *Restorative*, you might say. It's literally one of my favourite things to do - just set out after a meal and see where adventure takes the two of us with just a dumbphone, an mp3 player and a public transport card in my pocket, should we get really lost.



Hanging out under graffitied bridges in the cool shade, then wandering along paths with no idea exactly where we'd end up. There was just a sign that gave enough direction to know we'd eventually circle back towards home. How long it would take, how far we'd travel, what we'd see along along the way, that's all part of the journey...



Did I mention Spring's finally kicked in here? All hail the Daystar coming out in full effect again... that is until, we retreat from its full power come Summer. Spring means hay-sniff- fever for me and rashes for Shiva, but that's literally the least of our worries rn. Her tail was wagging the whole time... she met a wolf dog on the way, guarding its athletic-ware clad owner as she ran past us... me with my headphones on and personal soundtrack for the day cued up [Run the Jewels, Open Mike Eagle]. Yeah, I know, total male privilege. Siiiiigh. I'm so sorry about this world... However are we gonna fix it?

The past week I've been almost totally periscope down, just checking in with a few of the Others on the crypto backchannels. Gaining some reputation currency here, and possibly losing some

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there, with the slightly incoherent rants my malfunctioning brain generates; but that's why they call it the Reputation Economy, innit - because everything must be seen through the lens of teh_Market... but, here I am, alive and checking in with the wider world once more. We live (and they sleep.)

The truth is, I've been writing to you all for ages now. [Ed. This is the only newsletter in the series that was sent out before the pamphlet was published - watch the author fold space time inside your head, or just keep skimming ;)] For two whole months, hiding inside Scrivener, avoiding the Web as much as possible. Again, like most things, it started out simply and quickly grew out of control. I was sick... iknowrite?! and writing in my head, as one does, and thought, hey, I should write all this up as a series of newsletters... because that's clearly, for me anyway, the easiest way to communicate the things I slowly think through, that come to me in fever dreams 'n such as - seen from the outside - I'm lying there, prone on the couch, high on flu meds, watching every episode of *Star Wars Rebels*, yearning for Jedi Temples to ghost through.

Have you joined the dots yet? Don't worry, the chronology will sort itself out eventually, and this newsletter will be slotted amongst all the others I've been busy working -myself to near death, he dramatically exaggerated- on. This isn't in an instructional manual, and I'm no leader. Don't follow me. But do learn from my failings; falling and then getting back up is all you have to do. It's hands across the Abyss time. Srsly. Let *Find the Others* be the first law.

Whoa, heavy... Look, squirrel!!!

Back to the walk. Two or three hours later... who keeps track of such things these days? Oh yeah, everyone but me, basically... and fuck, I nearly sold everything to go buy one of dem prison planet bracelets with a heart rate monitor after days and days of intermittently racing pulses and feeling faint and other such things, and the doctors saying: "um, come back again in a few weeks for more blood tests, we're not sure."

They should've just said: *go outside, m1k3y. Nature heals all!* Which makes me sound like a hippie. Which I very much ain't. But I know a few. I barter eggs with 'em and get seedlings and gardening pro-tips in exchange. That's the local economy I'm interested in.

Food, rest... being a human for a while. That's what its about, or so I've been emphatically instructed. And having medical *SCIENCE!* tell you you don't in fact have walking pneumonia - which apparently is all the rage amongst future leaders of the

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Breakaway Civilisation, or so I heard binge listening to alt-right talkback radio YouTube (try explaining that sentence to your previous self, say... 5yrs ago even?)

No, but srsly... back to the walk. We get home, I've walked... a goodly quantity of kilometres (10, 15, 20? idk) with my dog - as we've been built to do by the Great Maker (lol) - as we have done most days for 99% of our specie's lifetime. Anyway, Shiva's swam and drunk at the creek, sipped at puddles and snacked at the remains of fast food left in bus shelters and doorways and such as we passed them by and she yanked on the lead, taking me over to them - and if you think that's gross, you know canines are Coprophages, right? Just like Mammoths were - and shall be again, by *Crom!*

And here's the thing. Why I'm writing this. That's the world I see. No you fucker, not the shit eating... I mean, whatever you do in your home is fine, but I won't let you lick my face afterwards ok... The aimless wandering, where no matter you go, food and water await us. It's just... there. Because we made it so. Streets lined with fruit trees. Whole cities turned gardens that slowly merge into the wild. The roads we built over the streams and rivers that drew our distant ancestors to the location to begin with, torn up. Metropolises made more resilient in the process. Floods that just don't kick our ass like they used to. And just maybe that kinda seems important as the climate grows ever more chaotic and heavy weather turns into *death weather*; despite the denials of so many those that would call themselves our leaders.

As I've mentioned before -timey wimey handwave- ::algorithmic recomputation, processing...:: the only twitter notifications I have switched on anymore are for local emergency alerts, and there's been a deluge of them here in Victoria, Australia. And, I think, maybe elsewhere? I dunno... who tunes in to the Imperial Broadcasts anymore? (Yes, yes, I know... I KNOW... people do. *The Mind War will continue until morale... wait, fuck dat shit!*)

The Restoration is the process we go through to get to a world where a human has as much freedom and access to resources as a dog does as they walk the Earth. You know what I'm sayin'? What lies at the end of that is **Fully Automated Next Nature Luxury**⁷. Where all the big box stores have been emptied out and turned into vertical farms and artist studios, into hacker spaces and art galleries, into anything we can imagine. Where we stash the relics the Empire has hoarded that we've raided back, before they're rightfully returned to the lands and peoples they were looted from. Where all the goods come from orbital factories - *praise be the asteroids* - and people in AR headsets, living in satellite cities beneath the geostationary *gigafactories* bridge

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the technology gap, before the emergent machine gods completely takeover operations - much as you see people on bikes riding trains, couriering goods today before those task monkeys are replaced by drones.

And you need to understand that this is already the plan. First the drones are dispatched from the same hubs that feed all those big box stores and land on your door, or meet up with you at cafe - because you're never offline and the Stacks see all. But later - and yet much sooner than you think - they'll swarm out from drop ships dispatched from the orbital factories. But you'll be so used to getting fulfilled like that you'll just be like 'cool incremental update, technocratic overlords' and put on the new merch from that VR documentary-porno-drama you like so much.

We can all see the path the future is taking, but we can shape its direction. Nudge, nudge. *Tilt!*

Let me share the seed of this Next Nature vision. It's a mere fragment from Bruce Sterling's book, what's it called, shiiiiiiiiit, um... oh yeah, *Distraction*⁸:

"We could integrate the natural world right into the substance of our cities. If we knew how to use our power properly, we could guide herds of American bison right through our own streets. We could live in an Eden at peace with packs of wolves. All it would take is enough sense and vision to know who we are, and what we want."

"That sounds wonderful, Senator. Why don't you do it?"

"Because we're a pack of thieves! We went straight from wilderness to decadence, without ever creating an authentic American civilization."

That short exchange was burned into my brain more than anything else in the whole novel.

And that's why seeding your mind with science fiction is so important. Don't just take my word for it:

"Great quote from former science adviser to White House: **if you don't read SF, you are not qualified to talk about the future.**" ~
@cordbettauthor⁹

As I said to my not-mentor when I DMed him that tweet: they spelled 'the present' wrong.

If you're just subsisting on a low calorie media diet of Imperial News Broadcasts and reality entertrainment, well, it's no wonder that the much awaited 'future shock' has manifested as 'reality denial' and people are getting infected by whatever ideological malware uploads itself into their meat computers.

The future isn't set on rails. We could hack the planet and then garden the Earth. Undoing the despoilment that's been the project of European civilisation since at least the Medieval Industrial Revolution.

We could start by returning to the methods used by the native peoples of America and Australia - and remember, European colonisation of both is just a mere few hundred years blip on continents that've been populated for tens of thousands of years just freaking fine until whitey showed up. They used fire stick farming to domesticate not the wildlife but instead the landscape¹⁰ - and then just had to maintain it. Every community living in tune with their local habitat. That's your ultimate Four Hour Work Week right there. But fire was just their cutting edge technology - we *carry the fire* now, and we can take that spirit and accelerate our way to the Post Anthropecene.

How does restoring the Earth's capacity to its pre-Anthropocene condition sound? It sounds like a start to me! There's no reason we couldn't have ten billion people living on this planet, re-merged with nature by the end of the century - all boundaries between us dissolved.

Looking out to the stars, ready now to take custody of dead worlds, watch over those just being born, and grind our way to sublimation at the end of it all.



[Fantastic Four]

In fact, let me turn the mic over to Reed Richards for a moment, giving his fellows at the Singularity Summit quite the serve. Rather than post in four pages of comics¹¹, I'll transcribe the bulk of speech instead, and let Reed drop the mic himself:

Here, at the end of human history, we sit on the verge of a transformative time. Never have we lived longer, eaten better. Worked less. Or possessed more things. We are more advanced than any species that has ever walked the earth. And now, with our Promethean urge truly

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unleashed, we stand on the precipice of scientific marvels that will catapult us into the next millennium.

Despite all this, evidence presented here suggests you have never been more pessimistic for our future. YOU FEAR TOMORROW. Throughout the day, the shock of this mindset has turned to disappointment, and now finally to anger... Specifically because of people like you, Dr. Clarke. "One Billion: the optimum population of humanity," is the narrow vision of a dying man. PRESERVE EVERYTHING.. Do whatever it takes to **hang on** a little **longer**. It's the speech of a coward, Douglas.

The future of man is not one billion of us fighting over limited resources on a soon-to-be dead planet, but one trillion human beings spanning an entire galaxy. The future of man is not here.. It is OUT THERE.

Because it's our new horizon. Because it's what's next.

Standing here today, I'm faced with questions: Do I want to be Magellan? Do I want to be Columbus? Or Cousteau. Or Armstrong? Or do I want to be you?

There comes a time when every generation has outlived its usefulness and must be cast aside for a new one...

It is with this understanding that I resign from this body immediately.



That's the Dark Extropian vision right there.

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As one of the key influences on the first season of *True Detective*¹² put it:

"It's important for us to confront the potential of the true abyss." ~ Nic Pizzolatto.



[True Detective]

'Cause it's that, or more like this. Sleep walking, hand-in-hand, to planetary extinction.

The whole Earth, a Sacrifice Zone¹³ to the Great Filter.

Imagine humanity's legacy being a puzzle for the next life form to look out and wonder about, as we did when we first set eyes

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on the dead world of Mars. In a million years from now, should something emerge from Europa or Titan, or just stop by on a field trip across the galaxy. *"What happened to the fourth planet, kinda seems like it shoulda been habitable, huh?"* the visitors will say, and just drive on.

Like, you know what a Syanthrope is? Here, I'll let the Great Wiki¹⁴ fill you in:

A synanthrope is a member of a species of wild animals and plants of various kinds that live near, and benefit from, an association with humans and the somewhat artificial habitats that humans create around them. Those habitats include houses, gardens, farms, roadsides, garbage dumps, and so on.

The category of synanthrope includes a large number of what humans regard as pest species. It does not include domesticated animals such as cattle, goats and dogs.

Examples of synanthropes are rodents, house sparrows, rock doves (pigeons), lice, and other urban wildlife.

That's the best we've done so far. That - and the Sixth Mass Extinction, obvz - is our lasting contribution so far to the natural world.

C'mon people, we're better than that!

Your homework assignment - and hey, this is being sent from Paper Street - is to read, if you haven't already, Gibson's *The Peripheral* and Sterling's *The Caryatids* just for starters, join the dots and then help me figure this out all. -three-eyed smiley face emoji-

You do that, and I'll get back to completing this goddamned mission I set myself.

But first, I need to cue up some Lana Del Rey, and go on another walk to a mate's place to play some video games. Emily Dare told me you can buy Acronym clothing inside the new playable cyberpunk dystopia that isn't actually happening before our eyes; Deus Ex: Mankind Divided. And I think I've earned that. I sure as shit ain't gonna be able to afford them myself anytime soon.

Hey, quick question: do sweet af tactical-ish clothing brands ever sponsor post cyberpunk thoughtcriminals... in the RL? Asking for a gear queer friend.

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¹ https://www.edge.org/conversation/stewart_brand-we-are-as-gods-and-have-to-get-good-at-it

² <http://arstechnica.com/science/2016/08/brain-training-with-exoskeleton-and-vr-spurs-recovery-for-paraplegics/>

³ <https://twitter.com/abolishme/status/744158549652180992>

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html>

⁵ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/you-pedestrian-ethics-autonomous-cars-making-emergency-decisions-save-lives-1506685>

⁶ <https://www.netflix.com/au/title/80009431>

⁷ An obvious riff on Fully Automated Luxury Communism (FALC) that Aaron Bastani & co have been on about for sometime - start here <http://novaramedia.com/2015/06/fully-automated-luxury-communism/>, read this maybe <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/mar/18/fully-automated-luxury-communism-robots-employment>? and I guess preoder Aaron's forthcoming work on the subject from Verso Books if you're sold.

⁸ <https://boingboing.net/2008/05/17/bruce-sterlings-visi.html> - again, don't just take my word for it, read Cory Doctorow raving about it here

⁹ <https://twitter.com/ccorbettauthor/status/769697323622338560>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brSPQ7sUE84> America before Columbus - one of my favourite documentaries I always put on when I'm sick to cheer me up.

See also: First Footprints [<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/firstfootprints/>]

¹¹ <https://m1k3y.com/2013/09/11/zerosociety-reed-richards-addresses-the-marvel/> but you can read them here ;)

¹² <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-one-literary-reference-you-must-know-to-appreciate-1523076497>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrifice_zone

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synanthrope>